

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES FINDINGS ON TEENAGE DISTRACTED DRIVING
Eighty-eight Percent of Teens Rated Distracted Driving as 'Very Dangerous' or 'Dangerous'

RALEIGH — Gov. Mike Easley today announced that findings from recent focus group results indicate that 88 percent of teenagers in North Carolina consider distracted driving to be “very dangerous” or “dangerous.” Teens also acknowledge that even though they know distracted driving is dangerous, they still engage in this type behavior on a regular basis.

“Motor vehicle crashes are the No. 1 cause of death for teenagers, so we must educate young drivers early on about the dangers of distracted driving before they form dangerous driving habits,” Easley said. “We will use these findings in a new campaign geared at fostering better driving practices among our teens and to reduce traffic crashes.”

The N.C. Executive Committee for Highway Safety conducted a series of six focus groups with students from the Governor’s Page Program to give the committee a better understanding of North Carolina teens’ driving habits and perceptions of the dangers associated with distracted driving. The findings will be used to develop a comprehensive public awareness campaign aimed at reducing the number of teen crashes in the state.

According to the National Highway Safety Traffic Administration, one in four crashes is caused in part by a distracted driver and, even though young drivers make up only 6 percent of total licensed drivers, they account for 13.6 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Seventy-seven percent of the teens interviewed in the study acknowledged that they talk on their cell phones while driving even though they ranked cell phone use as the most dangerous driving distraction. Each of the participants also agreed that distracted driving is a problem for every teen driver, as well as drivers in general.

The focus groups were comprised of North Carolina teens, age 13 to 18, from throughout the state who are about to or have already received their driver’s license. Each session engaged the teens in an hour-long discussion of distracted driving, teen driving behavior and how to effectively educate a teenage audience about the issue of distracted driving.

The N.C. Executive Committee for Highway Safety was formed in April 2003 as a coordinated effort among several agencies across the state to address emerging highway safety issues in North Carolina. For more information about the N.C. Executive Committee for Highway Safety, visit <http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/traffic/ECHS/default.html>.

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